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ABSTRACT

Despite the recognition of the problems faced by beginning teachers, the provision of effective induction programs both in Australia and other nations has been less than universal, with only approximately one-half of beginning Australian teachers involved in any substantive form of teacher induction program. This paper offers a review of literature on teacher induction and provides a series of guiding principles for designing a teacher induction program. Industrial, financial, and social barriers to the provision of effective induction programs are recognized. Teacher induction programs are viewed as a right, which should focus on helping, rather than solely evaluating, new teachers. (Contains 24 references.) (LMI)

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"Teacher Induction: Implications of Recent Research for Educational Administrators"

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"Teacher Induction: Implications of Recent Research for Educational Administrators"

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Abstract Studies of teacher induction both recently and in earlier times have revealed that the difficulties faced by beginning teachers have remained much the same, although there has been a recognition that it is not just the teacher straight from pre-service training who requires induction support, but also other categories of teacher such as the experienced overseas trained teacher and the teacher resuming after a break in service. However, despite the recognition of the problems teachers in a new situation can face, the provision of effective induction programs both in Australia and overseas has been less than universal, with only around one half of beginning teachers in Australia being involved in any substantive form of induction program. This paper reviews what is generally known about teacher induction and then, drawing upon recent research, provides a series of guiding principles which those designing or modifying a teacher induction program should attempt to address. The paper does however acknowledge that there are industrial, financial and even social barriers to the universal provision of effective teacher induction, yet also finds that teacher induction is a right, and not a luxury for beginning teachers.

Introduction

Recently I have had the opportunity to be involved in several research projects with relevance to teacher induction. The first of these was the "Review of Australian Teacher Induction" undertaken by DEET in 1991. I acted as a consultant to this yet to be released report and had the opportunity to interview beginning teachers, their principals, and sector level personnel in private and government education systems in Victoria and Tasmania, as well as having access to the data from the remaining states and territories.

For the past two years I have also been investigating teacher resignation from NSW Government schools (work in progress) and a key aspect of this research project was the interviewing of 57 teachers who resigned from NSW schools during 1991. Some of these teachers had resigned during or shortly after their first year of teaching, and all were asked to comment upon their initial teaching experiences, regardless of how long they had been teaching.

As well as these projects, there have been other recent investigations of teacher induction in Australia, including those by Quong (1991) in the Northern Territory and the Board of Teacher Registration in Queensland (1991).

What I would like to do today is to draw both upon these recent studies into teacher induction and the literature in order to propose a series of principles for effective teacher induction which educational administrators need to consider should they wish to design or modify a teacher induction program.

Because the DEET review has yet to be released, I am not at liberty to quote directly from it, and as such my comments are a result of my observations from the interviews I conducted and the general impressions that the project left with me.

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What is Known About Teacher Induction?

1. Teacher induction is sometimes mistakenly conceived as orientation or information transmission. While both should occur in any induction program, teacher induction is more than this, and should be seen as an on-going process including both formal and informal elements of socialisation and professional development extending from teacher pre-service training into the teaching career (James Report [England], 1971; Bassett Report, 1978; National Inquiry Into Teacher Education in Australia, 1980).

2. Teacher induction is also sometimes submerged into the general area of staff development, and thus its significance sometimes overlooked.

3. The level of involvement of teachers in formal teacher induction programs today appears to be no higher than the level reported by Tisher et. al. in 1979, with only around one half of primary and secondary teachers undertaking such a formal process.

4. However, where a form of teacher induction is in existence, it tends to be highly rated in effectiveness by both beginning teachers and principals. In addition, activities undertaken earlier tend to rated more highly than activities undertaken later in the first year of teaching (See Tisher, et. al., 1979: 26).

5. School administrators tend to rate the more formal aspects of teacher induction such as regular meetings and supervision more highly than more informal contacts or measures, which in turn tend to be more greatly appreciated by the beginning teachers themselves. When beginning teachers who had taken part in an induction program provided by the Catholic sector in Tasmania were interviewed by this writer, while rating the effectiveness of the program quite highly there was agreement that the "best part" of the program was lunch, where the beginning teachers had the chance to catch up with former university colleagues and share their experiences. By doing so, fears were allayed when it was found all were experiencing similar difficulties and it was thus not a case of individual failure. Beginning teachers in Victoria who had taken part in the Melbourne Diocese's impressive program "For Beginning Teachers" told a similar story.

6. While reduced teaching responsibilities for beginning teachers and release times for meetings and to observe others teaching appear to be worthwhile and desirable and have been widely advocated, only a minority of schools and teachers have access to such measures, which of course have financial implications for schools and educational systems.

7. The working day in primary schools tends to preclude potentially valuable avenues for teacher induction such as the observation of others, being observed by others, team-teaching, and other professional development opportunities. Secondary teachers generally are better served by induction programs than primary teachers, who tend to be more isolated within their own classrooms.

8. Beginning teachers, while frequently enjoying their pre-service training, remain uniformly critical of the practical relevance of such training for the task of teaching in schools. In particular, one study (Dinham, 1992) found that the traditional degree followed by an end-on diploma was the least well-regarded form of pre-service training in this respect, with those interviewed in the study generally speaking highly of their degree study but being quite scathing of the relevance and practicality of their diploma study and of the limited time they spent in schools prior to entering teaching. Teachers who had undertaken two or three year diplomas at teachers' colleges or Colleges of

Advanced Education were more ambivalent about their training. On the other hand, the concurrent degree and diploma and the four year integrated BEd were the most highly regarded models of teacher pre-service training and appeared to have the most successful marriage of "method" and "content". However overall, those interviewed were, as stated above, generally dissatisfied with their pre-service training and the preparation such training afforded for the task of teaching.

9. Generally, beginning teachers are not prepared for the workload they encounter in schools and their other responsibilities, even where the practicum has been rated as effective. Major areas of concern for beginning teachers are remarkably consistent across different studies and eras, the common concerns being:

- classroom management/pupil discipline
- teaching methods
- curriculum
- programming and lesson preparation, and for secondary teachers;
- marking. (See Veenman, 1984: 147)

In addition, interpersonal relationships continue to be an area of concern for beginning teachers. In particular, some beginning teachers appear reluctant to approach their supervisor for assistance lest this be construed as a sign of an inability to cope, knowing as they do that in turn their supervisor will be making a judgement on their being granted permanent status and accreditation. (Dinham, 1992).

10. Beginning teachers in many instances lack information concerning their employment conditions, probation, accreditation, etc. A number of resigned teachers interviewed in NSW stated that they thought they were qualified when they completed their pre-service training and found out quite late that they would be assessed for permanency and their "Teacher's Certificate". In a number of cases, being told that they were being considered for "unsatisfactory" determination came as a compete surprise (Dinham, 1992).

11. On the other hand, many beginning teachers experience "information overload" during the first weeks of teaching, with much of the finer detail "washing over" them. Perhaps this is the reason why there is often a discrepancy between what school administrators say they have provided for their beginning teachers and what the teachers themselves say has been provided.

12. The contribution made to teacher induction programs by tertiary institutions, teachers' unions, and professional associations appears to be generally low or non-existent.

13. While system and sector level educational authorities generally endorse the value of teacher induction, frequently the responsibility and financial support for teacher induction programs has been devolved or left to lower levels of the educational hierarchy.

14. There has been growing recognition that teacher induction needs to be site and context specific due to the need for the beginning teacher to adjust to the ethos and culture of the individual school, its students and the community (See Quong, 1991: 21, for example).

15. Local selection of staff is one way of ensuring better "fit" between teacher and school, providing that this measure is available and the school concerned has a sufficient "pool" of qualified staff to choose from.

16. Beginning teachers are still more likely to be posted to remote and/or difficult working and living environments, and are more likely to experience multiple unwanted transfers in their first few years of teaching than more experienced teachers (Tisher et. al. 1979: 26; Watson, et. al. 1989; Dinham, 1992).

17. Teachers from overseas, particularly those with non-English speaking backgrounds, teachers from other states and systems, and teachers returning after a break in service have particular induction needs that are frequently overlooked or not adequately met. One overseas teacher complained that he taught successfully in his own country for 15 years, but in Australia all people did was "judge, not help", while a mature aged beginning teacher observed that older teachers such as herself were "given less help and more responsibility" (Dinham, 1992).

18. The needs of beginning teachers vary from situation to situation and from individual to individual and must thus be individually assessed and catered for. In addition, the needs of beginning teachers have been found to change over time, and thus while beginning teachers might need information on school policies and procedures initially, they will later be more occupied with classroom management and preparation. Later still, they might need assistance with student assessment, reporting, interviewing parents, professional development and career planning, for example.

19. There appears to real value in mentoring (See Haipt, 1990), although problems can arise when the mentor is also the beginning teacher's supervisor. Beginning teachers frequently complain of being "watched", "judged", but not "helped" by their supervisors (Dinham, 1992; see also Board of Teacher Registration, Queensland, 1991: 5-6).

20. Internship and closer working relations between schools and tertiary teacher training institutions also have potential, although the actual details need to be worked out between the various parties involved. There are obvious problems but also potential benefits from extending the period of teacher pre-service training to accommodate models of internship. Regular classroom and school contact for pre-service students is universally highly regarded.

21. "Advanced Skills Teachers" are sometimes given responsibility for teacher induction, although with a heavy teaching load and other duties, teacher induction may by necessity be neglected by AST's.

22. The Principal has a major part to play in the success of any teacher induction program through the profile and priority induction is given in the school. Although he or she may have only a minor role in the actual delivery of the program, support for the program is important in its success (Caruso, 1990).

23. Teacher induction and such measures as mentoring have the potential to contribute to the professional development and job satisfaction of other staff members involved in the process, and the recognition they gain through this involvement (See Killion, 1990).

Principles for Effective Teacher Induction Arising from Recent Research

As a result of the above findings of past and recent research, the following principles which have implications for school administration and educational administrators are proposed:

1. Beginning teachers (including those from other systems, overseas, and those resuming teaching) need to be given sufficient notice prior to taking up their appointment to enable them to travel to the school, meet the staff, secure accommodation, and make initial adjustments to the working and living environment.

2. Ideally, the induction process should begin before teaching duties commence.

3. The practice of appointing beginning teachers to the most difficult and remote schools is problematic and should be avoided at all costs. Where it is necessary to utilise beginning teachers to staff such schools, attention needs to be given to "challenge" models which aim to increase teacher satisfaction rather than "deficit" models which employ contracts and periods of minimum service, allowances, etc. and tend to try to reduce teacher dissatisfaction (Watson, et. al. , 1989: 1-3; see also Herzberg, et. al. 1959 and Sergiovanni, 1967 for earlier work on teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction).

4. Local hiring of teachers should be utilised where possible to ensure best "fit" between the individual, school and community, recognising the needs of each party involved.

5. Wherever possible, beginning teachers should not be shifted in their first year of teaching as this accentuates the difficulties associated with the induction process, unless such a move is demonstrably in the interests of the beginning teacher.

6. Closer links between schools and teacher pre-service education providers need to be forged, particularly in the final year of pre-service training and the first year of teaching. Criticisms of the lack of relevance and practicality in pre-service teacher training need to be addressed. Internship is one way to achieve these ends, although the industrial and other implications need to be worked through.

7. Teacher induction needs to be site specific, negotiated, developmental and non-judgemental. Teacher induction kits provided by higher authorities, while valuable, need to contain in-built flexibility to allow individual induction programs for beginning teachers to be negotiated and formulated.

8. However, while induction needs to be school-centred, this is not to say that higher levels of the educational hierarchy can abrogate their responsibility, and thus they must be prepared to financially and materially support teacher induction programs e.g. by hosting a conference for beginning teachers early in the school year, by providing relief for beginning teachers and mentors, by developing support materials, by in-servicing staff, etc. It should be noted that in many respects, time is more important than monetary support for those providing and taking part in an induction program.

9. The elements of teachers' needs regarding induction need to be identified and addressed in the most appropriate way. For example, information on school policies and procedures might be best communicated in the form of a printed booklet, rather than risking "information overload" by providing this verbally in the first days of teaching. Other needs might best be provided through workshops, meetings or seminars.

10. Beginning teachers need reduced teaching loads to enable them to cope with the heavy demands of the first year of teaching (See Schools Council, 1990: 89-90).

11. Beginning teachers need time and the opportunity to engage in reflection and self-evaluation.

12. Mentors and others responsible for teacher induction need training and reduced teaching commitments to enable them to perform their role adequately (Schnieder, 1990). Ideally, the mentor should not be the beginning teacher's supervisor, and thus a "triad" system of beginning teacher, mentor, and supervisor is advocated. Where a teacher is in a small school, he or she may thus require assistance from mentors outside the school.

13. Consideration should be given to the selection of mentors, and to the involvement of the beginning teacher in the selection process (Bower, 1990; Zimpher & Rieger, 1988).

14. Beginning teachers and their mentors and supervisors need to meet regularly in a collegial and non-threatening manner (Odell, 1990) and induction not left to chance conversations over a cup of coffee, although this type of informal interaction is also important. Beginning teachers want and need regular feedback on their performance.

15. The informal socialisation aspects of induction should not be neglected, as beginning teachers have been seen to benefit greatly from informal and social contacts with other teachers, both experienced and in-experienced, and from within and outside the beginning teacher's school.

16. The school Principal needs to show interest and support, and where possible, needs to have a degree of involvement in the induction process. Induction programs need to be monitored, evaluated and modified where necessary, with beginning teachers taking part in these processes.

Concluding Remarks

The problems experienced by beginning teachers today are not new, but we seem to have ignored the lessons of the past. The DEET project and other recent research has clearly demonstrated both the necessity and the value of teacher induction programs. Suggestions have been provided in this paper of the elements and strategies that teacher induction programs should contain and address.

Today there is a universal recognition of the importance of education, and a corollary of this is the importance of teachers. We need to give our beginning teachers the best possible start in their careers as their input will be vital to an aging teaching service. To do this we need to provide both formal and informal measures of support to enable them to become effective teachers and valued members of our schools.

Teaching has never been an easy occupation and it is certainly not easy today. The present situation where only around one half of beginning teachers undergo any substantive form of induction program leaves too much to chance. The fact that those teachers (and their principals) who do participate in induction programs rate them so highly should clearly convey to us the necessity and potential value of effective teacher induction.

In short, we need to ensure that we are "helping", and not just "watching" or "judging" our beginning teachers.

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